

# USS IWO JIMA LHD 7



USS IWO JIMA At Sea (NNS) -- Sailors aboard the multipurpose, amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7) paused to remember Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal, who died Aug. 20 at the age of 94.

Rosenthal's photograph of the flag-raising atop Mt. Suribachi during the Battle of Iwo Jima in 1945 became the most famous image of World War II – an instantly recognizable symbol of the sacrifices made by American service members during the Pacific campaign.

Rosenthal's image, later immortalized by sculptor Felix DeWeldon as the U.S Marine Corps Memorial in Washington D.C., also serves as the official logo of LHD 7.

"Joe Rosenthal's famous image proudly emblazons the cover of every Sailor aboard USS Iwo Jima," remarked Iwo Jima Commanding Officer, Capt. Michael Walley. "It serves as a constant reminder of the heritage the Sailors and Marines assigned aboard this great ship serve to uphold."

"That picture is very inspiring to me," added Fire Controlman 2nd Class (SW) Jonathon Morgan from Moorehead City, N.C. "My grandfather fought at Iwo Jima, and that image reminds me of the sacrifices he, and everyone who served at the battle, endured."

At approximately 10:30 a.m., Feb. 23, 1945, Marines from Easy Co., 2/28 raised the American flag over Mt. Suribachi, signaling the capture of the strategic position.

It was then that Rosenthal noticed a Marine named Rene Gagnon scurrying up the cliffs with a larger flag tucked under his arm. He had been dispatched to the summit to help replace the first flag with a much larger one – one that could be seen across the entire island.

Although he missed the first flag-raising, Rosenthal instinctively prepared his camera in the off-chance he might get the second. "I saw a small group of Marines assembling a pole on the ground," Rosenthal remembered in a recent documentary. "I said, 'What are you doing, fellas,' and one of them responded, 'We're getting ready to put up this larger flag. The colonel down below wants it up. He also wants to make damn sure he gets that first flag back.'"

What he captured in 1/400th of a second proved an enormous sensation to the public back home, and made instant celebrities out of Sgt. Mike Strank, Cpl. Harlon Block, Cpl. Rene Gagnon, Cpl. Ira Hayes, Pfc. Franklin Sousley and Navy Pharmacist's Mate John Bradley.

"That picture brought the war home," said Information Systems Technician 2nd Class (SW) Hendra Samuel from Wayne, N.J. "It's such a strong, powerful image. To me, it represents everything America stands for. I still get a reaction every time I see it."

Iwo Jima serves as the flagship for the Iwo Jima Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG), which includes USS Nashville (LPD 13), USS Whidbey Island (LSD 41), USS Cole (DDG 67), USS Philippine Sea (CG 58), USS Bulkeley (DDG 84), and USS Albuquerque (SSN 706). Additionally, the Iwo Jima ESG includes the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), as well as various supporting elements from Assault Craft Unit 4, Beachmaster Unit 2, and Helicopter Sea Combat (HSC) Squadron 26.

Iwo Jima left its homeport of Norfolk, Va., June 6, and began a regularly scheduled six-month deployment to the U.S. European Command and U.S. Central Command area of responsibilities to conduct maritime security operations (MSO).

MSO help set the conditions for security and stability in the maritime environment, as well as complement the counter-terrorism and security efforts of regional nations. These operations deny international terrorists the use of the maritime environment as a venue for attack or to transport personnel, weapons, or other materials.

